



Haines Comprehensive Plan Revision

Joint Work Session with Planning Commission and Assembly

Haines Borough Assembly Chambers and via Zoom

June 20th, 2023, 6:15-8:00 PM

Haines Borough Assembly, Planning Commission, and Staff present: Doug Olerud (mayor), Annette Kreitzer (borough manager), Alekka Fullerton (borough clerk). Assembly members present: Margarette Jones, Gabe Thomas, Debra Schnabel, Ben Aultman-Moore, Jerry Lapp. Planning Commission members present: Justin Mitman, Diana Lapham, Richard Clement, Travis Eckhoff, Zack Ferrin.

Planning Team: Shelly Wade (facilitator) and Meg Friedenauer, Agnew::Beck; Meilani Schijvens, Rain Coast Data; Chris Mertl, Corvus Design.

Objectives

- Introduce the Haines Comprehensive Plan Revision project and team.
- Review the overall purpose and legal basis for comprehensive plans.
- Share examples, success stories, and challenges of developing and implementing a comprehensive plan.
- Confirm the Haines Comprehensive Plan Revision proposed approach, including process, timeline, outreach strategies, final products.
- Share what we've learned so far from – data, plans, reports, studies, conversations.
- Prepare Planning Commissioners, Assembly Members, and staff for the plan revision process.

Work Session

Please see attached presentation slides for substantive information shared and used to guide the joint work session.

- 1. What is the Planning Commission and Assembly's goals in the comprehensive plan revision? What would you like to see come out of the comprehensive planning process? What would make the plan the most usable and accessible and helpful document for you as planning commissioners and as assembly members?**

Comments from the Planning Commission and Assembly

- Would like the revised version to identify what has changed since the 2012 Comp Plan came out, like what has changed demographically and where are we headed.
- Would like the revised comp plan to be useful for future planning and zoning, to be the document the planning commissions goes to answer questions, aside from the borough code.
- Want the document to lack the ambiguity the current versions has. Also wants it to give a sense of the kind of community Haines is; it can't be everything for everybody. But is Haines a recreational economy? Is it a resource extraction community? The comp plan should identify those things.
- Wants a shorter, easier to use document than the current 300 page version.
- Wants the comp plan to show how Haines can utilize natural resources in the community; not just one resource over another, but how the community can diversify its resources.
- Shorten the current version by moving the section about the history of Haines to an appendix.

- Project Team: The planning team can design a comprehensive plan that helps all stakeholders utilize the plan. Dense sections, like Haines history or heavy statistical data, can be put in appendices and referenced in the body of the plan.
- How do policies and code sometimes with each other; code is law, the comp plan is a guide. How does the planning commission utilize both without conflict?

Comments from the Planning Commission and Assembly:

- Clear policies are important and the future land use map that will be developed for the comp plan incorporates those policies to capture the intent or goal for each area of the borough, like development, no development, or preservation. The code is the law that helps enforce or achieve those land use goals. Feedback so far has identified that there is conflict between the current comp plan, existing land use, and code, so this revision will try to address that. Adaptability and flexibility in the comp plan is also important; you can update the comp plan more often than every 10 years, if necessary. You can also use the comp plan process to identify if areas of the code need addressing.

2. How do the Planning Commission and Assembly use the current comprehensive plan?

Comments from the Planning Commission and Assembly

- I don't put a lot of weight on it currently; I rely more on the code and charter.
- As a new resident and planning commission member, it helped me understand the history and issues of the community.

3. Review of purpose and authority of a comprehensive plan and the local government

Summary of presentation points

- The comprehensive plan is an opportunity to engage stakeholders and partners.
- State statute, Title 29 outlines and provides director for municipal governments, including planning powers. One of those planning powers is to create a comprehensive plan. Title 29 sets some parameters for what a comp plan should include.
- The planning commission is the sole planning body for the borough, guided by the comprehensive plan.
- A comp plan is not a zoning document, but it is a foundation for fair and legally defensible execution of local government powers. It gives broad direction and specific strategies.
- Other planning tools include the capital improvement projects list, land use maps, permits; these all tied back to the comprehensive plan.

4. Economic Overview

Summary of presentation points

- Haines economy has quickly returned to pre-COVID Haines economy.
- Unemployment is low; rebounded quickly from losing a quarter of its jobs in 2020-2021.
- Haines economy is well diversified between government, healthcare, construction, retail, and wholesale sectors. Seafood jobs have declined over time.
- The number of visitors in 2022 was about the same as pre-COVID numbers.
- Haines Census numbers are being challenged because they seem vastly undercounted compared to the state estimates.
- Haines business attitudes are positive about their outlook.

Questions and discussion

- Question: Regarding “Barriers and Benefits” to doing business in Haines, is it common in other communities to have more barriers listed than benefits? Answer: Yes, that is common for all communities.
- Question: In “overall costs of business” category, what costs are included? Answer: It’s up to the person answering the question, but in Haines it seems that cost of transportation and freight are the prevalent costs businesses are identifying in this question.
- Question: What were business owners considering “negative” in the business outlook? Answer: That was a ‘spot’ question but the outlook seems to be improving. Discussion: A “same” economic outlook for a business doesn’t seem to be a positive; if you’re business is staying the “same” then it’s going backwards, and not improving in light of inflation. Business goals adjust every year. Maybe some of it is reflected as part of post-COVID.
- Questions: The Haines population is projected by the state to be declining in the next 20 years, but these projections seem to say the opposite. Which is true? Answer: Haines is an older population and must rely on bringing new people in to grow. The state population projections tend to be more pessimistic than reality. The state projects Haines to decline in six percent population over 30 years which is a very slow decline.
- Question: What is Haines’ average age? Answer: Currently it is 47.9. Between 2015-2022, the population under age 15 has gone up 16 percent.
- Comment: The demographics show that we have an older population, but we don’t have a lot of senior/aging services. These numbers show that we could do more.
- Question: How is government employment counted? Haines state jobs have decreased in Haines. Answer: State jobs have decreased, federal jobs have increased, and local government jobs, including Tribal jobs, have increased.
- Question: How does the data capture remote workers in Haines? Answer: There are people who live in Haines and work remotely elsewhere, and people who live elsewhere but work in Haines remotely. There is no good way to count them. We can count people who work in mining and live in Haines by contacting those companies.
- Question: Did the survey ask about availability of affordable land? Answer: We asked about availability of affordable housing, which fared much better than other Southeast communities. It doesn’t mean it’s not an issue, but perhaps better than other communities. The availability of land might follow that trend.

5. Review of project goals, approach, and schedule

Summary of presentation points

- The planning team is holding initial interviews with industry/organizational stakeholders and community members.
- A community survey is being launched this week.
- More community visits planned for July (potentially) and September.
- The planning team will begin drafting the plan around October, working toward our December deadline. That will include a public review draft that will have a 30 day public comment period. Revisions will take place in November after the public comment period.

- The comprehensive plan will help inform other planning efforts from the state and federal government, as they are major landowners in the borough.
- The planning team will contact and hold public meetings in other areas of the borough including Excursion Inlet, upper valley, Klukwan, and other areas.